DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 454 915 JC 010 503

AUTHOR Lund, Steven; Sanderson, Lee
TITLE Adventures in Teaching via Interactive Television.
PUB DATE 2000-03-00
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Conference (Vancouver, Canada, March 13-18, 2000).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom (055) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Colleges; Computer Uses in Education; *Distance Education; Educational Improvement; *Educational Television; Instructional Innovation; *Interactive Television; Teaching Methods; *Telecourses; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *Arizona Western College

ABSTRACT

Since 1991, Arizona Western College has provided interactive television (ITV) college courses to other sites within and outside of Yuma County (Arizona). This method of course delivery reaches students at distant sites not large enough to support a class and also allows teachers at several sites to offer courses to a larger student pool. It makes available a larger variety of courses, enabling students to take courses necessary for a certificate or degree program. However, ITV course delivery carries with it a distinct set of obstacles to learning. This report explores ways to overcome the barriers commonly associated with ITV instruction, which include: (1) distance--the instructor and students are not in the same room; (2) technology and classroom configuration, which may not be favorable to learning; (3) equipment that may intimidate or distract students; (4) compromised efficiency of traditional classroom activities; (5) limited spontaneity; and (6) video and audio materials that may not be cleared for broadcasting. Strategies to help overcome these barriers include: (1) sending students an introductory letter before the class begins; (2) offering an orientation to the ITV methods and equipment; (3) having a teaching assistant at the distant site(s); (4) soliciting student feedback; (5) visiting the distant site(s) at least once per semester; and (6) periodically rephrasing lecture material to ensure student understanding. (EMH)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 454 915

TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) 2000 - Vancouver
Presentation #3047 - Adventures in Teaching Via Interactive Television
Steven Lund and Lee Sanderson
Arizona Western College - Yuma, Arizona
Saturday, March 18

A BARE-BONES SUMMARY

Abstract
The presenters will explore ways to overcome the barriers commonly associated with instruction via interactive television in an effort to create an environment conducive to communicative language teaching.

Overview of Interactive Television
Since 1991, Arizona Western College has "narrowcast" through interactive television college courses to other sites within and outside of Yuma County, a sparsely populated area of southwestern Arizona. This method of course delivery reaches students at distant sites not large enough to support a class and also allows teachers at several sites to offer courses to a larger student pool. It allows for more variety of courses available, and thus enables students to take courses necessary for a certificate or degree program. A partnership established between AWC and Northern Arizona University has allowed for the sharing of ITV facilities.

Each site has one or more classrooms with television cameras, large TV monitors, and microphones for both students and instructors. The classrooms are similar at all sites and also contain pad cameras and Internet connections.

The ITV synchronous technology uses two-way audio and video allowing all participants to see, hear, and interact with each other. Remote-controlled television cameras are mounted above large monitors in the front and rear of the classroom. The instructor wears a wireless microphone that allows him or her to move freely about the classroom using the pad camera or whiteboard as needed. Students sit at tables equipped with a microphone for each student.

The technicians play an important role in ITV courses. They control the cameras, the volume of each microphone, and what is seen on the monitors. They troubleshoot technical problems with the remote site technicians and keep the instructor informed.

The number and variety of course offerings has increased greatly since the inception of ITV at AWC nine years ago. Currently courses are offered on ITV from nearly every department in the college. Speech, law enforcement, accounting, anthropology, and ethics are among the courses offered in Spring Semester 2000. On past course listings for ITV are language classes: Spanish 101, Mexican American Literature, and ESL.

TC010503

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
S. Sanderson
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Sample Case – Language Workshop I

Language Workshop I is a beginning level listening and speaking class taught two days a week. Encouraging language development through student made storyboards, it is one component of the first of five levels of ESL offered on AWC's main campus. Students brainstorm various topics in order to plan a storyboard using Polaroid pictures with appropriate captions. After taking the pictures needed for the topic and pasting them to a large piece of cardboard with the captions, the students practice and present the information to other members of the class.

In 1998, the ESL department offered Language Workshop I on the main campus and through ITV to San Luis, Arizona, a community about 25 miles south of Yuma, on the U.S.-Mexican border. Approximately 20 students enrolled in the main campus section of the course and 4 students in San Luis enrolled. The students at both sites indicated that they learned from, enjoyed, and were satisfied with the course.

The communicative activities typically used in a listening and speaking format can be adapted for use on ITV. Information gap activities are a natural across sites because of the different sets of information available to the students. The activity shown on video tape to those attending this presentation is one in which the students are answering questions about the college services available at the different sites; i.e., snack bar, library facilities, and transportation. The students at both sites learned information previously unknown to them.

Barriers Typically Associated with ITV

Any instructor who has taught via interactive television, regardless of his or her discipline, will tell you that this medium presents a set issues or variables that one does not normally have to deal with in a traditional classroom setting.

First of all, you have the issue of distance. The instructor and students are not all in the same room.

The technology and classroom configuration may create a less-than-warm environment. The furniture may be stationary. Each student has a microphone right in front of him or her. They have to be careful not to tap their pen or rustle papers as these sounds will be carried across the system. (Such sounds are very annoying to those at other sites.) They will have to look at a monitor to see their instructor or fellow classmates at distant sites.

You might encounter some reluctance on the part of students. All the microphones, cameras, and monitors may intimidate them. They might want their instructor in the same room. (They may not really know what an ITV class is when they sign for one and so, they might be a bit surprised when they walk into the classroom for the first time.)

For the instructor, all those communicative/collaborative activities you've had success with in a traditional classroom setting become a little trickier when you try to get students to interact with each other across sites.

Spontaneity in instruction becomes limited. You can't always take that brainstorm you came up with while driving to work and implement it that day, especially if the students will need materials for this activity.

And finally, video and audio materials you use in a traditional classroom are not necessarily cleared for use in ITV because what you are now doing is broadcasting these materials. This adds a whole new dimension.

Ways to Overcome Barriers and Help Make Students More Comfortable

There are a number of things instructors and support staff can do to overcome most of the issues we've just described.

First of all, the instructor should try to contact the students before the first session through a letter which clues them in as to what they can expect in an ITV class- the mode of delivery, the types of activities they will be involved in, etc. It could also contain some personal information about the instructor. This will help the students at distant sites to see their instructor as a real person and not just an entity they see through a television monitor. If you are unable to contact the students before the first session, it's a good idea to have this letter waiting for them at their places when they arrive on that first day. (In the handouts, you will find a couple of sample letters- one that Lee wrote for an introductory class and one I prepared for a higher-level class.)

As students arrive for this first session, it is also a nice idea to have a little music playing in the background to put them at ease in this high tech. environment.

Before instruction begins, it is important to give students a thorough orientation to ITV, the system and equipment. At our school, the ITV coordinator handles this in person. Other schools will use a video. It is important that students know right from the start the Do's and Don'ts-

Don't tap on the mike.

Don't rumple papers or whisper to your neighbor.

Push the button before you speak (if that's the kind of system you have).

Identify yourself and your location when you speak so the control room operator can find you easily.

Remember that you are being taped. (All our ITV classes are taped and held for two weeks. We'll explain the purpose of that later on.)

If you are teaching a lower-level class, you might want to arrange to have a teaching assistant in addition to the control room operator at the distant site(s). In Lee's case, she had a workstudy. The purpose of this person is to give the students the extra attention they may need at this level and to help the instructor make sure everyone in on the right page, etc.

Student feedback is important in any class but particularly in an ITV class. You want to know how the students are feeling, any frustrations they may be experiencing and so on. As you know, there are a number of ways to get feedback from your students such as

One-minute Paper (Cross and Angelo)

Postcards (Some instructors will require their students to send them X # of postcards throughout the semester to let them know how things are going and if there are any areas they need clarification on.)

Informal visiting over the system before class. (This also helps them to get to know you and you them.)

We encourage our instructors to visit the distant site(s) at least once a semester and teach from there if at all possible. It's good for the students to meet their instructor in person. It is also good for the students that are normally with you to experience what it's like to be a student at a distant site.

In order to facilitate these visits, we provide travel assistance in the form of mileage or a rental car, lodging and meals as needed. Our division chairs also help arrange for substitutes for the classes instructors will have to miss due to travel.

Earlier Lee shared with you some of the communicative activities she's had success with. We've found that the types of activities one does in a traditional classroom setting can also be done successfully in an ITV setting. It just takes a little more creativity and planning to work through the logistics of it all.

For example, we've found that you can form a small group comprised of students from one or more sites and that an instructor can work one-on-one with a student at a distant site by way of cellular phone and a pad camera (also known as an Elmo). This is where the control room operator and experienced ITV instructors in the form of mentors can help.

Stephen Fleming from the University of Hawaii has a nice website for foreign language instructors teaching via ITV. You'll find the URL on the handout. Based on his experience teaching Chinese via ITV, he offers a number of recommended activities.

Teaching via interactive television doesn't just involve overcoming obstacles. In addition to being able to reach students at distant sites, there are also some advantages not normally afforded in a traditional classroom setting.

To begin with, at least at our school, the sessions are taped. The tapes are kept for two weeks and put on reserve. This enables students who miss a class to catch up. It also allows students a chance to review parts of a lesson they are still a little unsure about. (Taping sessions also provides a safeguard against technical problems. If the system breaks down, the students at the distant sites will have an opportunity to view the session(s) they missed.)

An added benefit of taping the sessions is that it cuts down on cheating. Students do, however, eventually forget about all the cameras and monitors around them. We've had a couple of instances at our school in which students have been caught cheating on tape.

And finally, the ITV classroom often has audio-visual aids not readily available in many traditional classrooms such as the pad camera, which is a wonderful tool for showing small objects and zeroing in on texts.

Miscellaneous Considerations/Tips

Clothing and jewelry worn by instructors on ITV needs to be chosen with the camera in mind. Solid muted colors are easier to view on television and are not distracting. Jewelry should not make noise or be in a position to bump the microphone. If a wireless microphone is used, a pocket or belt is needed to hold the battery pack.

The turnaround time needed for materials, such as tests, to reach a remote site, be used in class, and then returned to the instructor needs to be planned for.

Using name cards for each student that are large enough to be clearly visible at the other site is a way of helping the students get to know each other.

Periodic rephrasing, paraphrasing, and checking for clarity are necessary to insure student understanding.

Training Program

As I mentioned earlier, it is important for students to feel comfortable in an ITV setting. This is equally important for the instructor. For this reason, our faculty go through an eight-hour workshop spread out over two days. This workshop is open to not just those who will definitely teach an ITV course but also those that are interested in learning more about the topic and exploring applications within their discipline as well as their comfort zone. Teaching via interactive television is not for everyone. Fortunately we have not had to force anyone to teach via ITV. (If the instructor is not comfortable, the students will not be either.)

We use a very hands-on approach with the workshop. Our purpose is to have them experience the medium as both an instructor and a student. We usually have participants at a distant site. If that's not possible, we will create a distant site in the ITV classroom next door.

In addition to learning about interactive television (how it works, the technology involved, ways to create a good learning environment, etc.), the participants have the opportunity to present two 10-minute mini-lessons.

In order to give these mini-lessons the flavor of a full-length lesson, we ask them to include the components typically found in a typical session:

Objective:	Making students overtly aware of what they are to learn
Bridge-in:	Motivating information that shows how lesson content is relevant to students' lives; why it is important to learn this material
Pre-test:	Quick check of students' prior knowledge of material
Activity:	How the students will learn and utilize the new information

Post-test: Brief affirmation that students have mastered lesson objectives

During each lesson, the other participants play two roles:
They play the role of students (on-site as well as distant-site).
They serve as a source for positive written feedback.

We encourage the participants to experiment in these lessons to find out what works and doesn't work. In addition to receiving feedback from their fellow participants, they also receive input from the trainers, control room operators, and experienced ITV instructors that are present.

If a particular activity doesn't pan out as planned, chances are that someone will be able to come up with a way for making it work.

By the time the workshop is over, the participants have a good understanding as to what teaching via interactive television entails, as well as some practical experience under their belts. At this point, they are ready to begin planning the course(s) they will teach should this be something they wish to pursue.

Recommended References

Foreign Languages on ITV (web site sponsored by National Foreign Language Resource Center - University of Hawaii), http://nts.lll.hawaii.edu/flitv

Teaching at a Distance: A Handbook for Instructors - League for Innovation in the Community College, 1999, http://www.league.org